

The future of the human race:

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) has a budget of \$14.3 billion, which is spent on both space and earth sciences (such as earth observation). Future research will be oriented towards experiments in the zero gravity environment of space, particularly those in the materials and biotechnology fields. Research in to space frontiers will likely be further enhanced if the US foresees problems affecting the human race, such as earth becoming a hostile environment, or some type of catastrophe affecting planet Earth. Research will continue into fast effective responses to (as well as early warning systems for), major catastrophes. Flights to distant planets will be several decades away, to other galaxies, maybe in centuries to come.

In the more immediate future, Washington "Think Tanks" such the Rand and Brookings Institutes have published papers on technology clusters in the US. These papers predict that clusters will be research-efficient business centers.

Looking to the future, we must take notice of the Administration's S&T policies and the direction of Congressional S&T spending. Future U.S. S&T policy information also can be gleaned from those close to the policy makers, including the new House Science Committee and the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee in the Senate. How effective the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) will be in the development of US S&T policy will be dependant on decisions of the new Administration led by President Bush. Other indications come from the Center for Science, Technology and Congress at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), which is a good source of reliable information.

Washington has had a good system of dealing with S&T issues. The National Academy of Sciences or the American Association for the Advancement of Science issues a meeting notice to discuss upcoming issues, or the OSTP commissions the Rand or Brookings Institute to write a report. Either way, top scientists and policy-makers and other interested parties gather in Washington at the bequest of these respected institutions, and have a forum (normally open) and debate the subject in question. The Administration and Congress receive these reports, normally with comments of support from the relevant academy or association, and eventually science gets funded by government.

4. USA's International S&T Activities

The USA continues to lead the world in scientific discoveries and the application of science through technology development, although recognising the value of and need for international collaboration. This collaboration is only held back by protectionist members of Congress and the current US national security restrictions on S&T (although limited to certain areas of S&T).